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FEBRUARY, 1904.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

A principle of right *vs.* money; that is exactly the question which the Publication Committee and the Board of Trustees have had to face. We started your JOURNAL with the plainly expressed policy to adhere to the letter of the ethical law in the advertising published in the JOURNAL. The "Principles of Medical Ethics" adopted by the American Medical Association and by this Society, Chapter I, Article I, Section 8 (page 191 of the Register), says: "**It is equally derogatory to professional character for physicians . . . to dispense or promote the use of secret medicines.**" That reads pretty clear and it does not seem possible that anyone could misunderstand it. A medicine is defined as a drug or a therapeutic application; broadly, anything used in the treatment of disease. Secret, is unknown. A secret medicine, then, is one *the composition of which is unknown*, and the ethical principles which our Society and Association have promulgated distinctly state that such secret medicines cannot be used or employed by physicians without violating the right. The question which every physician should be able to answer, if asked to do so, is not, "What is the name of the thing you are giving your patient?" but "What are you giving your patient, and in what amount?" Do you not see the difference? There are hosts of things made for and used by the profession, unfortunately, the ingredients of which the physician does not know. If asked, he could only answer, "Brown's Petaluma Tonic," or "Black's Antiedema Paste," or "Anti-this-or-that." He would not be able to state what he was really giving his patient. Suppose the manufacturer says the mixture contains iron, arsenic

and strychnin. Does that give you any information? Comparatively speaking, no. For you do not know how much iron, arsenic or strychnin the patient takes to a dose. You would still be using a secret medicine.

Note the language of the principle of ethics quoted: "To dispense or *promote the use of secret medicines.*" That is the phrase

ETHICS AND ADVERTISING. which brings the matter home to the Publication Committee, to the Trustees and to the House of Delegates. If we allow advertisers to present to the attention of our members and readers statements relative to "secret medicines," are we not guilty of a violation of this ethical principle? Are we not aiding in "*promoting the use of*" these things? It is of no avail to reply that somebody else, or some other journal does these things. It would be as sensible to defend the practice of murder or of rape by alleging that other people do them. Nor can it properly be urged that we need money to make a business success; one might as well support the practice of bank robbery or the profession of highwaymanship. It is a plain and simple question of right and wrong and admits of no compromise; certain things are either right, or they are wrong—which shall we choose? If the principle stated be true, and it *is* wrong to "promote the use of secret medicines," then such medicines cannot be recommended without stultifying ourselves, and to publish advertising matter relating to them is practically and tacitly recommending them. That was the position which the editor took when he started the JOURNAL; that position was endorsed by the Publication Committee when it took active supervision of the JOURNAL; it is the position which has again been emphasized by the Publication Committee, and unanimously endorsed by the Board of Trustees. Several perplexing questions came to the editor's attention, and they were put on file waiting for the decision of the committee and the Trustees. The committee has met and has decided; the Trustees have met and have passed a resolution sustaining the committee and recommending it to continue the original policy of publishing only such advertising statements as literally conform, within a reasonable interpretation, with the letter of the principle involved.

Why is all this such an important question that it involved a meeting of the committee and of the Trustees, and has taken up so much space? Let us see for a moment what it means. In coming to the decision to stick to the right thing, we have wiped out, by writing one of the shortest words in the English language—yet a word that

RIGHT OR DOLLARS?